

SECRETARY OF DEFENSE WILLIAM J. PERRY  
 INTERVIEW WITH ROBERT MACNEIL ON PBS-TV PROGRAM, "THE MACNEIL/LEHRER NEWS HOUR"  
 PENTAGON  
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ROBERT MACNEIL: We begin tonight with a newsmaker interview with the Secretary of Defense, William Perry. He's just back from a trip to the former Yugoslavia and meetings with NATO Defense Ministers in Spain.

Mr. Secretary, thank you for joining us.

SECRETARY PERRY: Thank you, Robin, for inviting me.

MACNEIL: Before we go to Bosnia, on Haiti, how nearly ready would you say the U.S. military has the situation on the ground there now for the return of Aristide?

SECRETARY PERRY: There's been very significant progress in the last week or two, Robin. Start off with the fact that the parliament has reconvened; that the mayor, legal mayor of Port-au-Prince, is back in office; that the chief of police, Francois, has left the country. President Aristide is now beginning to put his cabinet together. He's announced he will return on the 15th of October. We have electricity back on in Port-au-Prince and Cap-Haitien. And we have already repatriated almost 2000 Haitians from Guantanamo. All of this is substantial and significant progress towards building the foundations of a democracy.

And parallel to that, of course, we have a significant set of actions in restoring civil order in the country.

MACNEIL: And how far along, would you say, is that process?

SECRETARY PERRY: Well, we have removed the heavy weapons from the FAHD. That was, of course, some time ago. We have started to remove weapons from some of the paramilitary group. We've taken thousands of weapons and detained some of the paramilitary police people whom we thought were most likely to provoke violence. We have bought back weapons, more than 4000 of them to date. We have -- not well reported, Robin, is that we have squads of civil-military teams out to perhaps 15 different towns in Haiti now. You see the pictures of the activities in Port-au-Prince and Cap-Haitien, but there are many other towns in Haiti. And we have now sent these squads out that are mixing with the

people in these villages, they're working with the police. They've been very well received. There's been a very good level of civil order.

I think when you consider the level of violence which has been endemic in Haiti, when you consider that -- our best estimate is that 3000 people were killed by the regime in the last three years -- that the progress towards restoring civil order has been very good indeed in the last two weeks.

MACNEIL: Are you following a set plan, or are you improvising day by day?

SECRETARY PERRY: We have -- what I have described to you so far was precisely according to a schedule, the particular events that are taking place.

I have not described an activity which is just now getting under way, which is bringing the international police monitors and the police trainers into the country and working to bring up the new Haitian police force. That will take several months to accomplish that, but that is under way. It's been in planning for some time. The plan is to have well over a thousand international police monitors to gradually take the responsibility away from the military police that we have now. Of those 1000, about 200 of them are in the country right now.

MACNEIL: Was it the plan to shut down the military organization FRAPH, or did you do that only after they shot up the demonstration last Friday?

SECRETARY PERRY: We did that because we had reasonably good evidence that these particular members, first of all, had the large cache of weapons; and secondly, we had some reason to believe that they may have been plotting violence with them.

So, this was done on a selective basis. It was not -- we have not set out to eliminate the FRAPH as an organization. Indeed, the head of that organization, Emmanuel Constant, has -- just yesterday went on the air in Haiti and said he would not oppose the return of President Aristide and he appealed for calm. So we think that was a positive development.

MACNEIL: What was the deal with him? I mean he's widely suspected by Aristide supporters of being behind many -- much terrorism, violence, murders. Why isn't he detained? What was the deal with him?

SECRETARY PERRY: We only went after the people where we had some reason to believe that they were provoking violence and that they had the weapons to do that. We were doing it in a preemptive measure. This is basically what the

military would call a preemptive strike, to try to avoid problems.

MACNEIL: U.S. troops, I read on the wires today, are tracking down men that Haitians finger as attaches. Are you going to go after all five to seven thousand Haitians who are believed to be attaches? What is the plan?

SECRETARY PERRY: No, we are not.

First of all, I think nobody is going to try to go after all of those attaches. We are doing what we can to disarm them. But the main problem, through the months to come and the years to come, of dealing with basically thugs, which is what the attaches are, will have to be the Haitian police. And while we are performing some interim measures in that regard right now, the main effort is in bringing this police force up. And that's why we have this international training and monitor program under way.

MACNEIL: The ones you've detained, what's going to happen to them? Are they going to be delivered to the Aristide forces for justice, or what?

SECRETARY PERRY: Some of them will be released, if we find no reason to hold them, we see that they do not pose a threat to the society. The others will be turned over to the Aristide government when they come in office.

MACNEIL: Does the U.S. believe now that there should be trials of people alleged to have carried out those 3000 killings you referred to?

SECRETARY PERRY: There's a fine line between justice, providing justice in those cases, and between seeking retribution.

President Aristide has made a very important statement in that regard, in which he has called for reconciliation. And we believe that will be the dominant factor in his government when he comes back in, seeking reconciliation, trying to heal the wounds of that society.

MACNEIL: Does that mean no trials?

SECRETARY PERRY: I don't believe it means no trials. No.

MACNEIL: The U.S. isn't saying to him that reconciliation means just total forgiveness.

SECRETARY PERRY: No, we're not saying that. What we are saying, though, is that we agree with his call for amnesty. I think that is the dominant factor here. And the Haitian parliament will define the extent to which amnesty will be applied, the circumstances under which it will be applied. This will be a decision for the Haitian parliament and Haitian government to make, not the United States.

MACNEIL: Does the U.S. have any, do you have any evidence that General Cedras and General Biamby are going to follow the police chief, Francois, to the Dominican Republic?

SECRETARY PERRY: We believe they will be leaving the country on or shortly after October the 15th, but we do not have definite confirmation of that.

MACNEIL: There were stories today from the Dominican Republic that there's been a lot of investment by those men in land and so on in the northern part.

SECRETARY PERRY: Yes. We've heard those stories and we think that's certainly a possible outcome, but I cannot confirm that on the basis of hard evidence that I have.

MACNEIL: Now turning to Bosnia, Mr. Secretary, which you've just been seized with because of your trip to the NATO meeting, Defense Ministers meeting.

Your Administration has been chastised in the last week or so in editorials, in William Safire's phrase, for "meekly following our allies down a path of dishonor," he said, "caving in to British and French resistance to lifting the arms embargo."

Take us step by step through how you see what's happened in recent events.

SECRETARY PERRY: Let me speak specifically about the NATO Defense Ministers meeting, from which I just returned. And there, far from being meekly led down the path that Mr. Safire described, the United States provided real leadership, I believe, in proposing a plan of a more robust use and a more effective use of NATO air power to help bring about a peace plan in Bosnia. And that plan was unanimously accepted by all of the NATO Defense Ministers. We all agreed that the peace plan offered by the Contact Group is our last best chance for getting peace in Bosnia. And therefore it remained a critical point was to apply the pressure on the Bosnian Serbs to accept that plan. We think there's a window of opportunity in which that plan can still be accepted, and we're trying to put pressure on for them to do that.

The Bosnian government, as you know, has already accepted the plan. Now we want the Bosnian Serbs to accept it.

MACNEIL: Now, the U.S. has been pushing this. Britain and France, one understands, have resisted it, but so, also, have the NATO military commander -- sorry -- the U.N. military commander in Sarajevo and the U.N. civilian chief there. So is -

- since they still have to approve or call in the air strikes, is this statement of getting tougher by NATO going to result in any more aggressive action against the Bosnian Serbs?

SECRETARY PERRY: I met with the UNPROFOR commanders after the NATO meeting; in fact, at the request of the other NATO Defense Ministers. The purpose of that meeting was not to negotiate any plan with them, but rather to give them the background on why the Defense Ministers had come to the conclusion that they did. I was very clear to them that we were not proposing to take away from the ground commander the authority to call for, to request the air strikes. That is an authority which remains with the ground commander.

What we were saying is that when NATO was called on for an air strike, we want it to be an effective air strike. And we laid out the conditions that we think are necessary for those strikes to be effective, and I explained those very carefully to the UNPROFOR commanders.

MACNEIL: In other words, the action of taking out an empty, unused tank, which was the last incidence of an air strike, is not sufficient deterrence, in your view, to the Bosnian Serbs?

SECRETARY PERRY: I said specifically, and the NATO Defense Ministers said specifically, that that last action, we thought, was an ineffective action and we did not want to be associated with ineffective use of air power. We want a robust, effective way of using the NATO air power, and we lay out a very precise set of conditions under which we will use our air power in the future.

MACNEIL: Does that mean that the actions the Serbs, the Bosnian Serbs continue to take -- for instance, they've -- they are harassing Sarajevo airport all the time, causing it to be closed, opened, the city of Sarajevo. They've blocked 25 U.N. supply convoys this week. Is that sufficient provocation, right now, for more air strikes?

SECRETARY PERRY: The U.N. resolution very clearly calls out that any action which could be construed as a strangulation of Sarajevo is sufficient action for the U.N. commander on the ground to call for air strikes. In our judgment, yes, those actions, in aggregate, do represent a strangulation of a sort, and therefore are sufficient reasons for calling. Nevertheless, that judgment will still be made by the U.N. commander.

NATO is not in the position to determine when the air strikes are called, but we are in a position to say how our air power will be used. And

that is what we said in our Defense Ministers meeting.

MACNEIL: And the U.N. Commander, General Rose, has made it very clear that he thinks that too much action by NATO will only result in making the Serbs more aggressive against his own NATO forces there.

SECRETARY PERRY: I made it very clear when I met with General Rose and General de Lapresle and Mr. Akashi that the interests of the NATO Defense Ministers was in forcing -- or, putting pressure on the Serbs to reach a peace plan. No one, no one should have a greater interest in reaching a peace plan in Bosnia than the UNPROFOR forces and the UNPROFOR commanders.

So, I believe we have a common objective, a common interest, and we are trying to achieve a communication on how best to reach that common interest.

MACNEIL: The other issue that's -- with which your Administration is charged is that you have, under British and French pressure, backed down on Mr. Clinton's determination to ask for the lifting of the arms embargo against the Bosnian Serbs. And it's now asked why you have not, the Administration has not pushed the United Nations to pass the formal resolution calling for the lifting of the arms embargo, even though the Bosnian Serbs [sic] have, as they requested in their agreement to postpone it for six months.

SECRETARY PERRY: President Clinton has committed to the Congress to, within two weeks of October the 15th, to go into the United Nations with a request for a multilateral lifting of the embargo.

Now, subsequent to that commitment, the Bosnian government has stated that they would prefer a six-month delay in the enactment of any lifting. And therefore we would believe that any resolution would take effect six months later. And that's the window of opportunity I talked about to get to the peace plan this six-month period between now and between the time when an embargo might be lifted.

MACNEIL: But didn't the Bosnian Muslims, Bosnian government say, as a condition for agreeing to a six-month delay, that the resolution should be passed, though?

SECRETARY PERRY: We will propose -- the United States is prepared to propose such a resolution.

MACNEIL: It is going to do that.

SECRETARY PERRY: Obviously, that will

have to be determined by a vote by the -- in the United Nations. But we are prepared to propose that resolution.

MACNEIL: Is there going to be -- moving on to North Korea, Mr. Secretary, finally.

SECRETARY PERRY: Yes.

MACNEIL: It's been reported that the deal that President Carter made in North Korea is unraveling. Is that true, the way the North Koreans have been performing in the last talks?

SECRETARY PERRY: Let me start off by observing that the danger of a North Korean nuclear weapon program remains a major security problem for the United States. It's one which has my complete attention and complete focus. But the talks, which were made possible by President Carter's meeting with Kim Il Sung, have posed us a possible solution to that problem. But the talks, as your question suggested, have not reached agreement yet. In fact, I think it is fair to say that there are significant differences and significant disagreement between the North Korean side and the American side.

I don't want at this time to forecast an outcome for those talks, but I will say we are still talking.

MACNEIL: Is it true that Pyongyang is asking for billions of dollars to be paid for them as a condition for negotiating, even negotiating further?

SECRETARY PERRY: What is true is that Pyongyang has -- asking for several concessions for shutting down their nuclear program, the most significant and the most expensive of which would be providing them with a new nuclear reactor, a so-called light-water reactor. And without discussing the technical aspects of why we prefer that reactor to the one they have now, let me simply say it precludes the proliferation of nuclear weapons, and that's why we are in favor of the having that kind of a reactor. That's a very expensive proposition, though.

MACNEIL: Well, the way things are right now, after these talks, they probably have, you said last spring, two nuclear devices. They still won't let in the U.N. inspectors to inspect their reactors. So have we really got anywhere in these talks, would you say?

SECRETARY PERRY: Well, the talks have not reached an agreement yet. But if we reach an agreement, there will be several different elements of the agreement. The first and the most important element will be freezing, stopping their program and preventing them, thereby, from being able to develop and produce more nuclear bombs. A second element

will be getting a transparency on what they've done in the past, so we can determine with confidence whether they have developed nuclear weapons in the past; and if so, to remove those as well.

MACNEIL: Have the hopes raised by the Carter mission been borne out so far in the Korean posture at the talks?

SECRETARY PERRY: The hopes have been borne out, indeed, by the establishment of the talks, but the talks have not yet produced an agreement and we do not have one in sight at this moment.

MACNEIL: Well, Mr. Secretary, thank you very much for joining us.

SECRETARY PERRY: Thank you, Robin.